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Abstract

Analyzes changes made in the second edition of *The Broken Sword*, published in 1971, from the original 1954 edition. Comparisons of a number of passages show Anderson maturing in his technical ability as a writer and his psychological understanding of his characters, though Christopher regrets the occasional loss of a certain “lyric intensity” and hints of the “dark backward and abysm of time” found in the original.

Keywords

Anderson, Poul. The Broken Sword;

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The Broken Sword Reforged

by Joe R. Christopher

In 1954 Poul Anderson's fantasy novel, The Broken Sword, appeared; in 1971 a second, revised edition of this book appeared. Many things could be said of it. Those who are learned enough could discuss Anderson's handling of Nordic and Celtic mythology and English folklore, comparing these things to what the sources say of them, and so demonstrate Anderson's skill in their development. And the historically minded could discuss his brief pictures of the English society in the ninth century, how he agrees or disagrees with what other sources say, and how he makes that half-pagan, half-Christian time come alive. The psychologically oriented might discuss the ambiguous feelings the changling Valgard has for his foster-relatives, or compare the elven Leea and the human Freda in their love for Skafloc Elven-Fosterling. Or those who believe in archetypal patterns might trace that of Skafloc sailing north into the realm of ice and death, his fight with the white worm, his descent into a fiery hell past a canine guardian of the portal, and his reemergence from the land of death as a changed soul: dread, grim, bearing the sword Tyrfing; Skafloc himself becomes the image of death until he and his shadow die together.

But my purpose in this paper is not as exciting as those I have outlined. I have taken as my concern simply the differences between the two versions of the story. What changes has Anderson made in rewriting his novel, and (so far as a critic can guess) why? Perhaps I should begin with a critical parable: in the 1954 book Anderson writes:

> The whole troll nation was stronger than any other in faerie save--perhaps--Alfheim.
>
> (Abelard-Schuman, p. 106)

In 1971 this was revised to:

> Their nation was strongest in Faerie by far except--maybe--for Alfheim.
>
> (Ballantine Books, p. 82)

A critic must remain aware that his most triumphant examples of meaningful changes may be no more than the difference between perhaps and maybe.

Another trap for the critic is to assume because in the example I just quoted that save gives way to except for, therefore Anderson is involved in simplifying the language, modernizing it, for the paperback edition. Certainly sometimes he modernizes it; for example, in the staves which are recited by his hero, the thee's and thou's of 1954 are changed to you's in 1971. In fact, Anderson once sacrifices his alliteration in order to do this: the original stave began:

> This I ask of
> thee, beloved.
>
> (AS, p. 181)

The vocalized th provides the poetic structure, which is lost in the revision:

> This I bid
> you do, beloved.
>
> (BB, p. 138)

The stressed syllables here are This, bid, do, and love; despite the harmonies of rhyme in "you do" and of the stressed-unstressed alliteration of bid and be, the basic structural principle of this poetry is lacking. On the other hand, sometimes Anderson moves in the opposite direction. To take a simple example, in 1954 he wrote at one point, "And again she fled" (AS, p. 185); in 1971, he archaised slightly: "Anew she fled" (BB, p. 142). So the critic needs to be wary of oversimplifying the types of changes which occur.

After these small examples, perhaps it is best to start with the largest and most complex of the changes. Anderson mentions in his preface to the second edition that he "substituted one Person (in one brief though important scene) for another who didn't really belong there" (BB, p. xv). The scene he has in mind (I believe) is that in which the old witch calls up Sathanas. Before I come to the shift in personage, I should like to comment on a theological difference between the two appearances, or perhaps comment on Anderson's greater maturity when writing the second version. In 1954 he wrote:

> Thunder and lightning rolled about her hovel, with blue phosphorescent glare and the stink of Hell's pits. But the vast presence before which she groveled was beautiful in its inhuman way, for all evil is luring and this was the fount of it.
>
> (AS, p. 35)

In 1971 the paragraph appeared in this form:

> Thunder and lightning rolled about her hovel, blue glare and the stink of hell's pits. But the shadowy presence before which she groveled was beautiful in its way, as all sin appears beautiful to the willing sinner.
>
> (BB, p. 25)

The dropping of the adjective phosphorescent is no doubt simply an example of the "trimm[ing] away [of] a lot of adjectives and other wordbush" which Anderson mentions in his preface (BB, p. xv), but for me the interesting difference is that between the reasons for the Devil's appeal: "all evil is luring and this was the fount of it" as contrasted against "all sin appears beautiful to the willing sinner". The first version, which may well be the statement of a young man, is that evil is attractive; the second version, which may be the view of maturity, is that it seems so. The one puts the attraction in the object; the other, in the eye of the beholder. No doubt this interpretation is too much to base simply on one shift in phrasing, but I believe it will be supported by another example before this study of the Dark One is finished.

There are other things which could be said about the differences in the two scenes--there is an expanded discussion of Destiny in the second version, for example--but the vital differences comes at the end of the scene. The 1954 version ends simply:

> Now the witch swore a certain oath, and there the council ended for that time.
>
> (AS, p. 37)

The 1971 version adds an ambiguity:

> Now the witch swore a certain oath, and was told where and how to drink the knowledge she needed, and there the council ended.
>
> Save for this: that as her caller left the hut, she peered after him, and what she saw departing was not what she had seen within. Rather the shape was of a very tall man, who strode swiftly albeit his beard was long and wolf-gray. He was wrapped in a cloak and carried a spear, and beneath his wide-brimmed hat it seemed that he had but a single eye. She remembered who also was cunning, and often crooked of purpose, and given to disguise in his wanderings to and fro upon the earth; and a shiver went through

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her.

But then he was gone--and she had not really seen him clear--it could have been a trick of the starlight--she would not brood on such uneasy questions, but only on her loss and her coming revenge.

(BB, p. 27)

Within the context of the whole work, one can see why this change is an improvement. Odin had the sword brought to Skafloc's naming (like the evil fairy at the christening in a tale from the Brothers Grimm), Odin demands of Freda what is behind her girdle in exchange for saving Skafloc at one point, and he it is who takes her child and sends her after Skafloc at the end of the tale. Indeed, several times the elves and the Sidhe comment on their fear that the gods are playing the elves and the trolls like chessmen. So it is fitting that Odin should start the witch on her revenge, which will drive Valgard to the trolls and bring him into conflict with Skafloc--for if Valgard had not taken his sisters with him to Illrede, Skafloc and Freda would not have met and the child would never have been conceived.

Before leaving the summoning of Sathanas, let us consider his later appearance. In 1954 the Dark One announced:

"You are not my servant, you are my slave." The far voice rushed through the groaning trees. "What is it to me whether your purpose is fulfilled. I am the master of evil, which is futility. You have sold me your soul, and wrought enough ill to seal the bargain forever. What more concern have I with this shadow-play? It is time I reaped my harvest."

(AS, pp. 104-105)

Obviously this simple calling in of a contract will not do for the 1971 version; instead we have this passage:

"You are not my servant, you are my slave," the voice rustled. "What is it to me whether your purpose is fulfilled? I am the lord of evil, which is futility.

"Did you think you ever summoned me and struck a bargain? No, you were led astray; that was another. Mortals never sell me their souls. They give them away."

(BB, p. 81)

I rather regret the loss of the poetic description of the Dark Lord's voice, although I admit that this is an example of Anderson keeping his eye on the scene in the second version--why should Santhanas be so emotionally involved as to have his voice rush? But the point which ties back into the theological topic I was discussing earlier lies in the last two sentences of the 1971 version: "Mortals never sell me their souls. They give them away." This puts the responsibility onto "the willing sinner", for whom the earlier passage commented that "all sin appears beautiful". I do not know if Anderson intentionally revised these passages with this emphasis in mind, but I suspect, considering that these are simply matters of minor phrasing many pages apart, that they reflect Anderson's own attitudes (whether or not he would normally use such a theological framework) and this could be written without conscious checking for consistency.

I mentioned the revision of the description of Satan's voice as an example of Anderson keeping his eye (or perhaps I should say, his ear) on the scene. This introduces my second group of examples, which illustrate precisely this type of craftsmanship. First, let us consider Freda's dressing soon after Skafloc has rescued her from the trolls and brought her to Alfheim:

"Now 'tis time your broke your fast," he said. There was a dress laid out for her, of the filmy flowing spider silk worn by elf women. Freda blushed hotly as she donned it, for it hid little from Skafloc's frank blue eyes. But she could not but laugh with sheer admiration of the heavy gold rings he put on her slender arms and the diamond-twinkling coronet he set on her flowing locks.

(AS, p. 90)

Thus 1954. There is nothing particularly wrong with this paragraph, but it certainly does leave Skafloc's position while Freda is dressing undescribed. Does he leave the room? Does he watch her with his "frank blue eyes"? Again, a critic might guess that this passage is the result of a young man writing the book: he is so involved in imagining his heroine and her filmy clothing that he forgets his hero. Whether or not this was true, the revision certainly is more conscious of the situation:

He chuckled. "Then 'tis time you broke your fast," he said.

A dress had been laid out for her, of the filmy flowing spider silk worn by elf women. Though Skafloc did her bidding and turned his back while she changed into it, she blushed hotly, for it hid little. Yet she could not help feeling pleasure at the heavy gold rings he put on her arms and the diamond-twinkling coronet he set on her locks.

(BB, pp. 68-69)

Out of the many examples which I could choose, let me take a weather description for my second illustration. This passage interests me because I quoted the original version in my review of Katherine Kurtz' Deryni Rising for Riverside Quarterly ("Saint Camber Protect Us!", 5:1 [July 1971], 62), when I was praising Anderson's descriptive skills over those of Kurtz. Could he improve on his original, slightly overwritten as it was, I wondered? Here is the 1954 version:

A rising wind blew snow-heavy clouds ever thicker over the sky, so that the wan moon seemed to be fleeing the great black dragons which swallowed it and smothered the dead world in darkness. The wind alone lived, it wailed in the trees, it roared through the sky, it snarled around her where she stood in a blind fury of bitter noise. Hoo, hoo, it sang, blowing a sudden sheet of snow before it, eldritch white in the moon, hoo, halloo, hunting you!

(AS, p. 170)

And here is the 1971 version:

A rising wind blew clouds ever thicker across the sky, so that the moon seemed to flee great black dragons which swallowed it and spewed it briefly back out. The wind wailed and roared around her, whipping her garb, sinking teeth into her flesh. Hoo, hoo, it sang, blowing a sudden sheet of snowdrift before it, white under the moon, hoo, halloo, hunting you!

(BB, p. 130)

As I commented about the description of the Dark Lord's voice, here I feel the second description to be more exact while at the same time I sense a loss of lyric intensity. The first part of this passage is basically dependent on the image of the dragons pursuing the moon. The first version reads: ". . . the wan moon seemed to be fleeing the great black dragons which swallowed it and smothered the dead world in darkness." Technically, this image is inexact. How can the moon be fleeing in the progressive while at the same time it is swallowed and the world is smothered in the completed tense? And isn't the swallowing of the moon and the smothering of the world a very abrupt shift in metaphor? Anderson revises this clause to: ". . . the moon seemed to flee great black dragons which swallowed it and spewed it briefly back out." So far as a description of the moon passing behind a series of black clouds is concerned, this is certainly more exact. But I must admit that the metaphor is still not very satisfactory. Since the image now includes that of vomiting, the moon needs to emerge from the

mouth of the dragon in which it entered; and obviously the clouds do not blow back and forth in the sky. The only way I can see that this new image could be saved would be for the passage to read something like this: "the moon seemed to flee great black dragons which swallowed it and, twisting their heads in their flight, spewed it briefly back out for the following worms." Probably that would have slowed the paragraph down too much, but certainly some revision is still needed.

The second sentence of the paragraph is also interesting in its description of the wind and Freda. The original reads: "The wind alone lived, it wailed in the trees, it roared through the sky, it snarled around her where she stood in a blind fury of bitter noise." The revision loses the stacking up of four parallel clauses, settling for a clause and two participial phrases: "The wind wailed and roared around her, whipping her garb, sinking teeth into her flesh." I believe this illustrates what I mean by the loss of lyric intensity in the revision, while at the same time it shows Anderson focusing his attention more clearly on his heroine and thus creating a firmer surface to his art in his recasting.

Closely related to these passages I have used to show Anderson imagining his scenes more clearly are other revisions which improve the plot. A number of these are passages which I need hardly quote: for example, the sword is rusted in the original version (AS, pp. 16, 166) and unrusted in the revision (BB, pp. 12, 127)--certainly an unrusted blade is far more magical, and also more capable of being forged anew, than a rusted one. Other passages add details which are lacking in the original: how the trolls knew Valgard was coming to Trollheim (AS, p. 71; BB, p. 52); why Bolverk forged the sword originally (AS, p. 210; BB, p. 159); what happened to Freda and to Skafloc's body at the conclusion of the tale (AS, p. 274; BB, p. 207). One passage which does bear quoting, and which closely follows the passage on Freda's dressing which I discussed above, is that in which Freda yields her love to Skafloc. The 1954 version is this:

> And Skafloc kissed her, long and lingeringly. She sought for a moment to fend him off, but she seemed to have no strength, and in the end she gave him back his kiss.
>
> "Now, was that so bad?" he laughed.
>
> "No--" she whispered.
>
> The day ended and night came to the vale of summer. They lay by the rushing waterfall and listened to the nightingale.
>
> (AS, p. 95)

This love seems to have appeared to the mature Anderson to be so impetuous as to need explaining, as indeed it is. After all, Freda has had most of her family killed, has been kidnapped, and rescued, and now, after a sleep and most of a day in her rescuer's company, is persuaded to make love. This is possible, of course, but not very probable with the type of Christian background Anderson has given Freda. Thus he expands the passage greatly in the 1971 revision:

> And Skafloc kissed her, long and with all his skill, softly at first, wildly at last. She sought for a moment to fend him off, but she could not find the strength, for it only came back when she joined in the kiss.
>
> "Was that so bad?" he laughed.
>
> "No--" she whispered.
>
> "Your grief is fresh, I know. Yet grief will fade, and those who loved you would not have it otherwise."
>
> In truth, it had already gone. Tenderness remained, and a fleeting wistfulness: Could they but have met him!
>
> "You must take thought for your morrow, Freda, and still more for the morrow of that blood which you alone now bear. I offer you the riches and wonders of Alfheim, aye, asking no dowry save your own dear self; and you and yours shall be warded with every strength that is mine; but first among my morning gifts will be my undying love."
>
> It could not be compelled, but since it would have come of itself, elven arts hastened the thawing of sorrow and the springing forth of love; for its blossoming, no other sunshine was needed than youth.
>
> The day ended and night came to the vale of summer. They lay by the waterfall and heard a nightingale. Freda was first to sleep.
>
> (BB, pp. 72-73)

This expansion is not grammatically perfect, for the reference of the pronoun it in the paragraph after Skafloc offers his love turns out to be her love, not his. But otherwise the new version seems admirable. Skafloc says the appropriate things: that her dead relatives would not want her to grieve forever, that she must continue her family, and that he loves her and wishes to marry her. I say marry because he uses such a term as dowry, but of course what he is proposing is not a Christian marriage but an elven one: a common-law marriage, or what we would call today "a lasting relationship". Nevertheless, he says the appropriate things, and his speeches are supported by the reference to elven arts hurrying a process which would have taken place more slowly otherwise. Even the image is well chosen: the year's cycle suggested in the clauses that say the "elven arts hastened the thawing of sorrow and the springing forth of love; for its blossoming, no other sunshine was needed than youth." In this description springing becomes a subtle pun.

I can only describe this expansion as a result of artistic or psychological maturity on Anderson's part: he now shows greater understanding of Freda's character. And this is not an isolated passage: the earlier description of her dressing shows the same ability of think of how she would feel, as does a later passage, during their outlaw life, when Anderson adds a sentence, "They learned that their bodies were the least of what there was to love", and a whole paragraph about Freda's emotional response to her life with Skafloc as contrasted with (or tied to) her Christian background (AS, p. 151; BB, p. 116). Even Skafloc's reaction to that first love making is more fully explained, more permanent sounding, in the second version than the first (AS, p. 95; BB, p. 73--but Anderson had explained this slightly later, anyway, and had to cut the passage in revision because of his new, earlier explanation: AS, p. 100; BB, p. 78).

But I do not want to be exhaustive about this type of analysis. Let me conclude with two less significant examples of changes which interest me for more personal reasons--or perhaps I should say, for more prehistoric reasons. One of the delights of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings which most readers feel is the historic depth of the author's created world. Obviously, Anderson, with his story set against the human world of the ninth century, is not able to create history in precisely the same way that Tolkien does. And the two passages I have in mind are not just episodes which happened before the beginning of the book, such as Thor's breaking of the sword. No, these are references to what in human time would be the megalithic era or earlier. The first of these appears when Imric makes the changeling upon Gora; in 1954 Anderson wrote:

> Thereafter he walked nine times widdershins about her where she squatted, singing a song no human throat could have formed, a song which certain beings had sung once, shambling around a strangely carved monolith, to bring forth the fruits of a quaking steamy world. As he sang, the troll-woman shook and swelled and moaned in pain, and when he had gone

Continued on page 44

teaching Latin. Everything she wrote was permeated with humor, for no matter what the subject, if it was worth writing about at all, it was worth the effort to write with humor as well as scholarship, wit as well as honesty and understanding. The English language was a tool but it was also a creation, and deserved the respect and proper manipulation due all works of art. In the end, she wrote her own epitaph:

> The artist knows, though the knowledge may not always stand in the forefront of his consciousness. At the day's end or the year's end he may tell himself: the work is done. But he knows in his heart that it is not, and the passion of making will seize him again the following day and drive him to construct a fresh world. And though he may imagine for the moment that this fresh world is wholly unconnected with the world he has just finished, yet, if he looks back along the sequence of his creatures, he will find that each was in some way the outcome and fulfillment of the rest--that all his worlds belong to the one universe that is the image of his own Idea.[21]

FOOTNOTES

1. London Times, Dec. 19, 1957, p. 10.
2. Dorothy Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), p. 207.
3. Dorothy Sayers, Whose Body, in Three for Lord Peter Wimsey, (New York: Harper & Row, 1940), p. 126.
4. Dorothy Sayers, Unnatural Death, in Three for Lord Peter Wimsey, p. 490.
5. In "Gaudy Night" by Dorothy Sayers, printed in Titles to Fame, edited by Denys K. Roberts, (London, 1937), in The Mind of the Maker, and in Charles Morman's The Precincts of Felicity, (Gainsville, Fl.: University of Florida Press, 1966).
6. Dorothy Sayers, Gaudy Night, (New York: Avon Books, 1970), p. 232.
7. Gaudy Night, p. 236.
8. Dorothy Sayers, The Zeal of Thy House, p. 38, quoted in The Precincts of Felicity.
9. Zeal, p. 67.
10. Zeal, p. 37.
11. Dorothy Sayers, "The Dogma is the Drama," reprinted in Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 23.
12. Dorothy Sayers, "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged," reprinted in Christian Letters, p. 13.
13. Dorothy Sayers, "A Vote of Thanks to Cyrus," reprinted in Christian Letters, p. 50.
14. Dorothy Sayers, Unpopular Opinions, quoted in Christian Letters, p. 55.
15. Dorothy Sayers, Unpopular Opinions, (London, 1937) p. 21.
16. Dorothy Sayers, The Man Born to Be King, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 3.
17. Man Born, p. 15.
18. Man Born, p. 204.
19. Mind of the Maker, p. 22
20. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in The Tolkien Reader, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), p. 55.
21. Mind of the Maker, p. 207.

I would also like to thank Mary Shideler, who made a great deal of material available to me.

(Continued from page 39)

> the ninth time around she screamed so that it pierced his ears and rang in his skull, and she brought forth a man-child.
>
> (AS, pp. 12-13)

The second sentence of this passage is unaltered in the revised edition, but the first sentence suffers a strange shortening:

> Thereafter he walked nine times widdershins about her where she squatted, singing a song no human throat could have formed.
>
> (BB, p. 9)

I must say that I miss the reference to the "certain beings" who were singing and "shambling around a strangely carved monolith, to bring forth the fruits of a quaking steamy world." Possibly Anderson omitted them because he felt they were distracting from the essential point of Imric's making the changeling. Possibly he felt this was a needless additional mythology. I do not think of any other artistic reason for the omission. But I regret the omission: it suggested the "dark backward and abysm of time" (quoted by C. S. Lewis from somewhere in Surprised by Joy ((London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955)), p. 21). If the reason for the omission was because it slowed down or distracted the reader in the paragraph, perhaps the cause for this effect was that it is both definite and indefinite at the same time. Who are these strange beings, singing in a non-human way, who dance around a stone and bring forth vegetation? I picture them as the Stone Age gods, the half human/half animal forms painted on cave walls by Paleolithic man. But I may be wrong. Even if I am right, perhaps the fact that I ask myself such a question about them may indicate that Anderson was right in omitting the passage. Perhaps it needed either more explanation or complete omission. But I regret it.

The other passage goes the other way, appearing only in the second version. I could have included it as an example of Anderson picturing a scene more clearly, but I reserved it for this conclusion of my paper, for it also reflects the prehistory of the book's milieu. The 1954 version reads:

> The elves were driving into Valland with the trolls retreating before them---a retreat that became a rout and finally, caught against the sea, a butchery.
>
> (AS, p. 236)

But in 1971 Anderson had revised the sentence to read:

> The elves were thrusting into Valland with the trolls in retreat before them... a retreat that became a rout and finally, caught against the sea under the cromlechs and menhirs of the Old Folk, a slaughter.
>
> (BB, p. 178)

Certainly the added details are an improvement for the reader in his visualizing of the scene. But where the obvious details to be added were a description of the beach--sand or pebbles or shingles--Anderson's addition not only creates a scene but also adds to the richness of the novel's historical mythopoeics.

I began this paper with a parable of maybe and perhaps, but as it developed, I entered into a number of conjectures about the author's growth in maturity in making certain revisions (sometimes with loss of lyric intensity). A critic's guessing about the author's state of mind is always dangerous, but in this particular case Anderson invited it in his preface to the revised edition by calling his younger self more "headlong, ...prolix, and...savage" in his writing (BB, p. xv). At any rate, leaving the author out of it, I think I have suggested that the changes are not all simplifications of style but often show a greater awareness of the precise scene, that some are plot improvements, and that some show a greater psychological awareness in characterization. I do not recommend the second edition without reservations--I miss some of the prolix adjectives and some of the intensity of the first--but the majority of changes are improvements. The reforging of The Broken Sword was done with good craft.